

that the trains would not pay; but I understand that a large number of passengers who formerly went by steamer now go by rail between Dunedin and Invercargill, and *vice versa*. The distance is run in about seven hours, and that is about as good time as we can do it in. This is where an important point comes in: If the connection of the 6.5 a.m. train from Clinton with the northern express is broken, passengers and mails from stations south of Mosgiel for stations north of Oamaru will be compelled to travel by the express which leaves Invercargill at 11.15 a.m. daily, remain all night in Dunedin, and cannot resume their northern journey until 11 a.m. the following day. They will thus occupy twenty-four hours on a journey which at present takes nineteen hours only, including the night of nine hours at Clinton. To obviate this difficulty it would be necessary to run night trains between Invercargill and Dunedin, a distance of 139 miles each way, or 1,648 miles of train-running per week, necessitating an expenditure of over £19,000 per annum. To enable passengers from Dunedin to connect with north-going trains at Wellington, assuming that the steamer journey between Lyttelton and Wellington could be performed in ten hours—that is the time mentioned—the express would require to leave Dunedin at 8.30 a.m. and arrive at Lyttelton at 7.30 p.m. The steamer would depart from Lyttelton at 8.30 p.m., and arrive at Wellington at 6 a.m. next morning. Such a service would enable passengers to get straight through to either New Plymouth or Napier, but would necessitate the running of night trains between Dunedin and Invercargill, as stated above, otherwise Southland would be deprived of its present connection by afternoon train. A considerable amount of delay could be prevented if the steamers at present running between Lyttelton and Wellington left the former port daily at 10 p.m., after arrival of express from south, instead of leaving at 10 p.m. on three days per week only, as at present. The average number of passengers booked by through trains is very small, and is as follows: Napier to Wellington, two; Hastings to Wellington, one; Wellington to Napier, two; New Plymouth to Wellington, four; Wanganui to Wellington, four; Wellington to New Plymouth, six; Wellington to Wanganui, five; Lyttelton to Christchurch and Dunedin, eleven; Dunedin to Lyttelton and Christchurch, ten; Dunedin to Invercargill, ten; Invercargill to Dunedin, sixteen. Passengers from Auckland under existing arrangements leave Onehunga about 1.30 on Mondays and Thursdays, arrive at New Plymouth about 5 a.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays, leave by train at 7 a.m., reaching Wellington at 9.50 p.m. same day. Passengers have to remain in Wellington until the following day's steamer. Passengers leaving Auckland on Mondays cannot therefore reach Dunedin until 9 p.m. on Thursday night. If, however, the boat left Wellington at 11 p.m. on Tuesdays and Fridays, after the arrival of the through train from New Plymouth, and took, say, ten hours on the journey, passengers could connect with express at Christchurch on Wednesdays and Saturdays and reach Dunedin same night, saving at the least twenty-four hours on the journey time. With regard to the running of the steamer between Wellington and Lyttelton, I find from inquiry that the boat has only failed to connect on eight occasions during the last six months. On one of these occasions the cause was due to the disablement of the steamer, two others to the fact of the steamer being detained in Wellington for the San Francisco mail, when the passengers were taken south by mail special. The department always put on a special train in such cases to run through from Lyttelton to overtake the express at Timaru, or it may be at Oamaru. There is always a car put on to that train for passengers. The Clinton train regularly connects with the northern express at Dunedin. It never fails to do that. The northern express has been occasionally detained for a few minutes but not more than that, and that time is made up on the run. There is a margin left for transfer of passengers and luggage—a margin of ten minutes. The express as a rule makes up any time that has been lost. This is all the information I have been able to prepare for the Committee in the time allowed me.

6. *Mr. Duthie.*] Are there many through passengers by the train from Clinton to Dunedin? We want to know the value of the train-communication between Clinton and Dunedin?—There are very few through passengers between Clinton and Dunedin except those who go by the express.

7. You have been dealing with a through service, and I wish to know whether there is much passenger traffic between those two places by the ordinary local service?—There are very few who go by the ordinary train. No one would go by it who had a choice of going by any other. It takes about fifteen hours to get by the ordinary train, and, as you can imagine, no one on a cold winter's morning would go by it if he had a chance of going by a faster train. The fast train which we have put on has been of great service as a mail connection.

8. You have through service from Invercargill to Dunedin daily?—Yes.

9. *The Chairman.*] Will you tell us, Mr. Ronayne, what is your view of the effect that a quick connection between Lyttelton and Wellington would have in increasing the passenger traffic on the railways? It is an important point to know what possibility there is of securing for the railways any passengers who now go by sea between Dunedin and Lyttelton and Wellington and Auckland. What is your opinion?—I do not think that the Railway Service has very much to look forward to in that respect, because you will always have to fill up that gap between the two Islands; you must always cross the Straits somehow; still, if there was a fast steam-service in connection with the trains there would no doubt be a tendency on the part of the passengers to travel by trains which connected with that fast service.

10. Would it not do more than that? Is it not a fact that many passengers coming from the South to Wellington go on to New Plymouth by sea because they fail to connect with the train from Wellington? They get here too late to catch the train; and so they go on by steamer owing to the want of connection. Is not that the case?—Yes; they have to wait until the following morning, and catch the train which used to go at half-past 6 o'clock, but which now leaves at 6.50 a.m.

11. If the trains in the South Island and the steam-service from Lyttelton to Wellington were so arranged that passengers could arrive in Wellington about 7 o'clock in the morning, would you not secure passengers who are now altogether lost to you?—Yes; I believe we should. I believe the department would get an increased number in that way—if there were an express steamer, such